

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HUNTER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. THOMPSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

LABOR RIGHTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to take this opportunity to salute first of all organized labor and to talk briefly about the role that it has played and continues to play in the lives of average citizens, ordinary Americans, the role that it has played in helping to create what we call the middle class.

Every day when I pick up the paper, the first thing that I generally see is where the rights of workers are being eroded. We are continuing to downsize, outsource, privatize. There is a tremendous amount of anti-union organizing activity. We see the diminution of workers' rights and the elimination of fringe benefits. More and more people are forced into having to work part time, with not a real job where they have benefits, where they know that if they should become ill, they can go to the doctor or go to the hospital.

In a world that is increasingly connected by international trade and investment, the need for enforceable rules in the global economy to protect workers' rights and prevent a devastating drive to the bottom in labor standards has never been more critical than what it is today. Working together, countries must take steps to establish minimum international labor standards so that increasing trade competition between nations does not continue to spiral downward.

The fact is that since NAFTA was enacted in 1993, the United States has lost more than 600,000 jobs. U.S. companies have less stringent labor and environmental standards. In fact, more than 150 U.S. companies have left the U.S. for Mexico since NAFTA and are now relishing in the fact that they have avoided compliance with important worker safety and health standards. And, of course, they are getting away with paying their employees as little as \$7 a day. How can a Teamster, for example, who might make an average of \$19 an hour compete with this? The fact of the matter is that he or she cannot. And each and every time we go to the bargaining table to negotiate a

good, fair contract, we are berated with threats of companies relocating. In the end, American jobs are eliminated, our wages are suppressed, and benefits cut. Unfortunately, the World Trade Organization does not seem to be concerned with this problem.

I was pleased not long ago to listen to my colleague from North Carolina talk about reauthorization of the agricultural bill and the fact that rural America must have a real place in it. I was thinking that when we reauthorize that bill, we need to make sure that we look at some of the subsidies that we are giving to agribusiness, that we look, for example, at the tremendous subsidy that the sugar growers are getting which is keeping the cost of sugar so high in places like where I live that candy companies are going out of business, or they are talking about moving to Mexico or Argentina or someplace other than in the United States.

And so I think it is a call to arms for the workers of America to unite, to keep coming together, to keep organizing, to make sure that there is protection for the average person, the workers of this country.

WORKERS' RIGHTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. SOLIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. SOLIS. Madam Speaker, today I rise to talk about the importance of workers' rights. I want to tell my colleagues a little bit about my own personal history. My parents came as immigrants to this country. Because they became a part of working America, they were also involved in the union movement. Because of that, we had protections for our family, seven brothers and sisters. Because of that protection, my father lives a better life. He lives on a fixed income with a retirement, a pension plan. My mother is well. But the fact remains that before the union came into their place of work, they suffered quite a bit. My father, in fact, was exposed to very hazardous and toxic materials and as a result became involved with the union to provide protection so that other employees there, immigrant employees who could not speak English could have clothing, appropriate clothing and even an oxygen mask that would help prevent them from being exposed to harmful chemicals.

My mother worked for many years, 20 years exactly, on her feet almost 10 hours a day and now suffers from arthritic problems and severe varicose veins. She was lucky, though, that she had the union to fall back on, to provide her protections, medical coverage not only for herself but for her seven children and I as one of those. It has not been an easy road for them, and I thank the unions for providing that safety mechanism for them and my brothers and sisters.

But the movement of the union effort needs to go on. In fact, I was very priv-

ileged as a member of the State Senate to run the industrial relations committee where I was very much involved in helping to raise the minimum wage. I am sad to report that in the Federal Government, our minimum wage is much lower than the State of California. In fact, it is at \$5.15 an hour. In California, it is \$5.75. It is still below the poverty level. In fact, if we were to raise it up a bit, we would still have to give a boost of \$1.24. We still have a long way to go. Working America needs a break.

In my opinion, we have much to do to protect women, particularly many of those that are forced to work two and three jobs at minimum wage to raise their families. Many of them have children. Many of them sorely need insurance, health coverage and many other protections that are provided to union people. Many of those individuals are seeking to organize and have not been successful because many anti-union companies or businesses are trying to erode any support so that they can collectively bargain for their rights.

I want to put my support behind efforts that I was recently involved in in California in the city of Vernon with a particular organization there that was trying to organize women and immigrants that were working to sew mattresses and blankets. Some had worked there for 30 years at the Hollander Home Fashion in Vernon and were not given any kind of retirement benefits or any kind of pension plan. Thirty years at minimum wage and not one increment. I went out there and met some of those workers. Thank God that the employer there came to his senses and they were able to work out an agreement. They now have a collective bargaining agreement that will provide protections for the some 200 or 300 workers that I saw there in Vernon.

I cannot say that about an ongoing effort right now with Pictsweet Mushrooms in California where farm workers are trying to get also a better medical plan, a pension plan, and the one that is being offered right now by the employer is much too small and it would require a much greater premium on the part of the worker. The California Agricultural Relations Board has upheld an unfair labor practice charged against Pictsweet by the United Farm Workers. The United Farm Workers won that, but we still need to do more. I stand here now in support of what the Pictsweet Mushroom employees are working on.

We have a long way to go for working families, especially those that are new immigrants, that are coming to this country with the realization that they want to share in the American dream. I would ask this House and body to put forward a minimum wage bill to provide protections for all workers and to work to provide more sufficient coverage in terms of OSHA, because we know that there are many, many thousands of workers that lose their lives, that go to work thinking that they are

going to have some protections in place and find out that they cannot even go home because something happened at work.

I would ask this Congress, this body, to please take note of these issues.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PALLONE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING FROM A HIGH TECH PERSPECTIVE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. INSLEE. Madam Speaker, I come to the well of the House today to speak in favor of and to recognize the importance of collective bargaining. I would like to do it from the perspective of my particular district. I represent a high tech district in the State of Washington just north of Seattle that includes Redmond where Microsoft is located as well as many software firms. It includes a biotech corridor where some of the new medicines are being developed with our new genetic technology, Immunex and others. From that perspective, a lot of folks have thought in the new economy where we have high tech jobs and software and biotech that the importance of collective bargaining or organized labor would fade away. I just want to say today that from the perspective of the high tech economy represented by my district, the importance of collective bargaining to people remains just as large and fundamental as it always has been in this country.

I want to tell just a couple of stories as to why that is true. First the story of Northwest Hospital in my district where a large group of employees desired to be represented by the SCIU, the service employees union, from a variety of professions at the hospital. Something interesting happened when those workers decided they wanted to be represented by SCIU. What was interesting that happened is that the hospital management, unlike a lot of places, decided not to try to intimidate workers, not to try to browbeat workers, not to interfere in the decision by the workers who are really the people who ought to have the decision whether to be represented or not represented. As a result of that, the workers freely voted and indeed in this case voted to be represented by that bargaining unit. To date there has been peace and harmony and increased productivity at that hospital I think because of that peaceful relationship. It was one example about how where management took a progressive attitude to allow workers to freely voice whether or not to be represented, things worked well.

Now I want to talk about the current situation at the University of Washington where the teachers assistants have expressed a desire to be represented by a bargaining unit of the UAW. Despite, I think, their clear manifestation of a desire, the administration of the UW has felt constrained, they believe they do not have the legal authority under the Washington State legislative structure to enter into a bargaining unit at the University of Washington. Many people, myself included, believe that is a misinterpretation of Washington law.

Nonetheless, that has created a lot of tension and the lack of the ability to move forward between the management, essentially the administration of the University of Washington and the teachers assistants. It is a situation where collective bargaining has not been able to move forward at least due to the perceived belief of the University of Washington management that we have not been able to move forward in a collective bargaining agreement, much I think to the detriment of the institution as a whole.

I think it has been instructive as to why collective bargaining needs to be recognized. We have been hopeful that the administration would take another look at the interpretation of Washington law. Failing that, we have also been hopeful that the Washington legislature would do some house cleaning and simply grant very specifically to the University of Washington administration the ability to collectively bargain. I am told that our friends in the other party have blocked efforts of that in the Washington legislature. I think that is very, very shortsighted. To simply give the University of Washington management the same authority that other management anywhere in America has to enter into collective bargaining units.

I want to say today from a high tech corridor, there is good news in a bargaining situation in a hospital. There is bad news in another high tech corridor, the University of Washington. We are hopeful that that gets resolved so that the parties can move forward in this very important right of collective bargaining to organize. That is the story from the high tech world.

INTRODUCTION OF BIPARTISAN SOFTWOOD LUMBER FAIR COMPETITION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFazio) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFazio. Madam Speaker, I would certainly echo the comments of those that preceded me in the well about the contributions of organized labor to all working people in the United States and join them in supporting their efforts. But I come to talk about a specific sector of the economy and specific workers, that is, people who work in the lumber and wood products industry.

Back in the 1980s, the United States Department of Commerce found that Canadian lumber is heavily subsidized.

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The Reagan, Bush I and the Clinton administrations have all found the Canadian lumber is subsidized. Numerous Canadian sources, including the BC Forest Resources Commission, Canadian Private Wood Owners Association, Maritime Lumber Bureau have also found those subsidies. That is not in question.

The subsidies come in three primary forms. The provincial government owns 95 percent of the timberland in Canada and administratively sets the price of timber one-quarter to one-third of its market value.

Agreements allow Canadian mills long-term access to timberland in exchange for cutting to subsidize the timber. No matter what the market conditions are, they are required to harvest and process the lumber, and they lose their licenses if they do not do that.

Finally, they are really back 50 years ago or more in terms of their environmental practices. They regularly violate principles set by the Canadian national government in terms of streamside buffers; drag logs through the streams and destroy precious salmon habitat. The results of that are being reflected in crashing salmon runs off of Canada and Alaska.

In response, in 1996, the United States and Canada negotiated a softwood lumber agreement. Unfortunately, that has expired and negotiations to extend or revise the agreement have not occurred despite the fact that many of us have contacted the current administration and asked them to make this a high priority.

We have seen statistics that say a mere 5 percent increase in lumber imports, subsidized lumber imports, from Canada could cost 8,000 jobs in the Pacific Northwest. So we feel this is of the utmost priority.

I am introducing legislation tomorrow with the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD), bipartisan legislation, the Softwood Lumber Fair Competition Act, and I really appreciate the fact that the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD) has joined me as the chief Republican sponsor. It also will have support and introduction of a number of other Democrats and Republicans from various parts of the United States.

If Canada will not do the right thing and come back to the negotiating table and the Bush administration will not take the initiative, then Congress must force the issues through enactment of such measures as the Softwood Lumber Fair Competition Act.

Our legislation is based on the import relief provisions of the Steel Revitalization Act, which has 212 bipartisan cosponsors. The legislation requires that the President take necessary steps by imposing quotas, tariff surcharges, negotiate voluntary export restraint